

Cities of Parts, Cities Apart?
Changing Places in Modern Melanesia

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Tell Me

Tell me about the town
The streets and the cars
The wharves and the buildings
And why are they there.

Tell me about the town people
How they dress
The way they speak, their behaviour
And why they never return.

Tell me about the tourists
Where they come from
Who they are
And why they carry cameras.

Tell me about the shops
Who the shopkeepers are
The goods they sell
And why they are so expensive.

Tell me about the cinemas
Who owns the pictures
How much do you pay
And why are some not suitable for children.

Finally tell me if you will marry me
And take me to town with you.

John Laan

In no part of the world is urbanization as recent as in the Pacific and above all in the countries of Melanesia: Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu, and Solomon Islands. In this paper we do not consider New Caledonia, currently a French possession, or Fiji, and we pay particular attention to Papua New Guinea, where urbanization has been most pronounced and the literature is relatively plentiful.¹ Cities and towns are recent, small (both in size and as a proportion of the total population), and are first and foremost colonial impositions—centers of trade, administration, or resource extraction. Prior to colonization, no Melanesian urbanization had occurred, despite early domestication of agriculture and extensive, long-distance trade; even the smallest central places were absent. In these traditional worlds, there were no premodern cities that might be replaced and challenged by colonial order and discipline. Urbanization was a product of the colonial encounter. In this paper, we search for threads of unity and diversity in the postcolonial towns and cities; outline the lack of cohesion, the disarray, and the division that distinguish cities where most residents are still closely tied to rural but often inaccessible origins. We seek to provide an overview of the social significance of towns and urban life, and to situate this overview in the context of some elements of cultural theory, especially the roles of modernity and tradition, however these might be defined. First, we trace colonial beginnings, which have left their imprint on many aspects of society, institutions, and physical form; second, we consider the functioning of places we have termed *cities of parts*; third, we examine how Melanesian cities—and economies and cultures—are part of a wider whole; and finally, we consider problems in the planning and delivery of urban services.

COLONIAL BEGINNINGS

The towns and cities of Melanesia are a product of foreign intervention and necessarily took on a colonial form (King 1990, 16–20). Residential areas were modeled on those of Australia, itself a colony when Melanesian urbanization first began. The houses too were the same; in the nineteenth-century Papuan mining boom, they were even dismantled in Cooktown, Queensland, and rebuilt in Papua. Half a century later, as cars were imported, cities sprawled over considerable distances; as in Australia, there was no notion of urban consolidation, pedestrian traffic, or bicycle transport. Europeans—bureaucrats, traders, and even mission-

aries—did not walk. Their towns were small-scale and peripheral colonial endeavors at the ends of empire; they were not unambiguously expressive colonial places, with layouts representing (in the words of the architect who built Rabat), “the genius for order, proportion and clear reasoning” of the French nation (quoted in T. Mitchell 1988, 161). They were, instead, seedy and dusty outliers of largely uninterested colonial powers; in the 1920s Port Moresby resembled “a superior mining town” or “a collection of hot tin roofs.” Indeed, “it was hard to persuade the residents of Port Moresby to take enough interest in the town to beautify it: nor did the government consider that building beautiful colonial towns in the German manner was the Australian way” (Inglis 1974, 35). In Vanuatu and Solomon Islands it was not the French or the English way either; the towns were not representations of colonial order and discipline.

Melanesians were not part of the urban world. Until after the Second World War they were permitted in towns only under employment contracts, and such contracts were of limited duration; urban residence had a wholly economic rationale. In the 1920s Port Moresby residents of Melanesian origin were regulated by curfews; whistles or bells sounded at 8 AM and 9 PM to demarcate periods when they were allowed in town (Connell and Curtain 1982, 462–465). Workers were almost always housed by their employers; domestic workers in Papua New Guinea were accommodated in the *boi haus*, which still survives in the grounds of many houses. Surveillance was thorough. From early days the Melanesian and European areas were otherwise segregated and, where there were Chinese traders, they also occupied separate areas. In Port Moresby, Melanesians and Europeans had their own hospitals, and the swimming pool was reserved for European use. At Burns Philp’s store in Port Moresby, Europeans were fanned by punkas while Melanesian customers were served through a window opening to the street outside. In rural areas, migrants, whether in town or on a plantation, were recorded by patrol officers (*kiaps*) in the village book as “absentees”; their true place was in the village, where “the social, the racial and the spatial were embodied in explicit linguistic and conceptual form” (King 1990, 9). Until secondary and tertiary education arrived belatedly in the postwar years, only rare hospitalization led to urban visits, and hospitals were assuredly places in which to die.

Distinctiveness was regulated; assimilation, sexual relations, and marriage between different groups discouraged; and multiculturalism wholly

implausible. Though civilized Europeans covered their bodies, and Papuans were forced to wear loincloths in towns, covering the upper part of the body was expressly forbidden for Melanesian men and women. The "other" remained, and was expected to remain, exotic. The government anthropologist in Papua, F. E. Williams, wrote in 1932: "You can never be quite the same as the white man; and you will only look silly if you try to be. When we see a native in European clothes we usually laugh at him" (quoted in Inglis 1974, 6). Gambling and alcohol consumption were also forbidden. Attitudes to houses paralleled those to clothes; when Motu and Koita villagers on the fringes of Port Moresby built houses with iron roofs, Williams wrote, "We like to see the Motu and Koita houses. If you build one like a European copra shed it will not look very pretty" (Inglis 1974, 7), even if some European houses were little more than small copra sheds. In Mitchell's words, "Both economically and in a larger sense the colonial order depended upon at once creating and excluding its own opposite" (1988, 164). In Port Moresby, Papuans who had become Christians, earned wages, and had some education were resented as a threat to European supremacy in a way that was impossible in rural areas. This attitude was emphasized by the fear, even paranoia, of black attacks on white women that led to the passing in 1926 of the White Women's Protection Ordinance. But there were few white women and even fewer Melanesian women in towns. Distinctiveness was emphasized by the social and political context of gender.

As the colonial era continued through the postwar years, urban separation of all kinds was a characteristic legacy, as reflected by Honiara a decade before the independence of Solomon Islands.

There is very sharp segregation. On the flat land by the shore are the port, commercial centre, government offices and other institutional and functional buildings. Further east are a closely built Chinatown and a separate "village" for the Fijian community, then beyond that the main labour barracks, some industry and other institutions, and a shanty settlement euphemistically termed "Fishing Village." In recent years some "low-cost" housing for Melanesians has been built in valleys running inland. Almost the only Europeans living on the flat are single staff, who occupy apartments, and the High Commissioner, who has more palatial quarters: most others live in widely dispersed houses scattered over the pleasant and relatively cool hills behind the town. This contrast between "white highlands" and "black lowlands"—only now beginning to become blurred—is particularly stark, but Honiara is not unrepre-

representative of post-war towns, or of suburbs in larger towns [of Melanesia] until very recent years. (Brookfield with Hart 1971, 397)

Such distinctions, and attendant discrimination, have contributed to the small contemporary Melanesian urban population. Cities, though now largely Melanesian in ethnic structure, retain their colonial layouts, housing estates, supermarkets, and have acquired airports, television stations, and multilane highways rather than pavements or bicycle tracks. The informal sector is inconspicuous, a victim of retained colonial legislation (eg, against food vendors who compete with established interests), lack of skills, small markets, and the often more-than-comparable earnings in the rural sector. The hustle and bustle of Asian and African cities is absent, especially on Sundays, because Christianity and trading legislation combine to impose peace. Occasions where crowds gather, such as urban festivals, political rallies, or strikes, are few. Urban life is a personal phenomenon in Melanesia. Although third- or even fourth-generation urban residents are present today, impermanence is still inherent in some aspects of urban life. Built into the contracts of many workers, including the prestigious occupations of mineworkers and bureaucrats, are annual return fares to village "homes." In such a context, even long-established urban residents may have a rural home.

CITIES OF PARTS

Working in the office, making money, pushing papers . . . I sign other peoples' work. You don't get the kind of wisdom you require, personally. The personal satisfaction. To see the results of my personal achievement . . . the feelings in it. . . . This feeling of Trobriand pride has been entrenched in us as little kids. Thinking, why can't we do this here in Moresby? It belongs to Kiriwina.

Trobriander in Port Moresby (quoted by Battaglia 1986, 19)

As early as 1875 Port Moresby had been described as "a regular metropolis and a complete babel" (quoted in Inglis 1974, 46). Over the subsequent century, Port Moresby and other Melanesian cities have become both more metropolitan and more cosmopolitan. Papua New Guinea has more than 750 languages, and a greater number of cultural groups (or tribes), Solomon Islands has 80, and Vanuatu has more than a hundred. A quarter of the world's languages are spoken in Papua New Guinea, and Vanuatu has more languages per capita than any other country. In the urban areas,

residents from most of these cultural groups make up an unparalleled cultural diversity.

Most urban residents are migrants born outside the city and speak their vernacular language, some Pidgin, and English (or French in Vanuatu), but are more confident in their vernaculars, which possess a cultural resonance and complexity that imported and recently constructed languages lack. Most live with fellow migrants, identify with their social concerns, and experience city life via a world of kinship contacts. As long as employment is primarily a male phenomenon—enabling males to cut across social ties in the workplace—and migration of women is mainly passive, social life in the cities will remain gendered.

In many spheres access to employment is gained through kinship or *wantok* associations. Even elements of the “modern” sector, such as the hundreds of buses that ply the roads of Port Moresby, are owned and operated by kin groups, mainly from the Highlands. Few organizations cut across such social phenomena. Unions are few, rarely militant, and primarily associated with the upper echelons of employment (ie, bureaucrats and mineworkers). In Melanesian cities class consciousness remains weaker than ethnic affiliation and is largely something studied by outsiders, “a procrustean bed of external intellectual endeavour” (Stevenson 1986). Other organizations—churches, sports clubs, and so on—subsume social groups rather than cut across them. Few Melanesians are active or prominent members of church or sports groups; most such organizations have an ethnic base, even among tiny migrant groups (Strathern 1975, 164, 364ff; Battaglia 1986, 9).

In Papua New Guinea the urban gang is “one of the few structures in which tribal lines are blurred in favour of larger social groupings” (Harris 1988, 47; Nibbrig 1992). Urban residents are able, and most choose, to live the bulk of their lives as members of their own cultural group. Ties with “home” and kin are vastly more important than links to neighbors from other cultural groups, though these may be mobilized for particular reasons (Strathern 1975, 256–273; Connell 1988a). Even for those in formal sector employment, urban life is rarely intended to be permanent; for most migrants, urban residence is a “rural-oriented” strategy, designed to generate income and prestige for a successful return to the security of rural areas, where land rights exist. The intention to return reinforces group affiliation in town.

Social groups in the cities are necessarily different from those in the

home areas, because numbers in the cities may be small and certain categories of kin are likely to be absent. Nevertheless social affiliations form (or do not form) and are developed in the same manner as they would in rural areas. There are hierarchies of such affiliations. For Trobrianders in Port Moresby, those from one's own place or village are the best known and most frequently contacted, after close clanspeople and close nonclanspeople such as paternal kin. Such village connections in turn form the nucleus of soccer and social clubs recruited on the basis of their "inland," "coastal," or "small island" origins (Battaglia 1986, 8). Though in some cases friendship ties may be stronger than clan ties (Strathern 1975, 170), and workmates more important than kin, these are exceptions that enable the majority to follow the norm and stress its ideological significance. Friends are kin, others are strangers and enemies.

In the largest cities, encounters with others are transient and characterized by standardized workplace and market interactions and myriad temporary commercial transactions, and always in the context of difference, especially ethnic variations and the opaqueness of linguistic variations. (Ethnic variations are most striking between coastal and highland Papua New Guineans, and between western, Malaitan, or Polynesian Solomon Islanders.) Encounters with those who are socially peripheral—Melanesians from other cultural groups—are fraught with uncertainty and "charged with excitement, stemming from a sense of freedom, potentiality and adventure. . . . Although liaisons [between young men and women] occasionally occurred, more typically the efforts by a young man to impress a young woman from another group provoked a fight between the young men of both groups" (Gewertz and Errington 1991, 104). Such disputes sometimes evolve into extended tribal fights in town, as occurred in Lae late in 1992 (see McLaren 1991; Strathern 1975), though they may merely replicate rural divisions. Numerically small urban cultural groups, such as the Trobrianders, feel vulnerable, explicitly try to ensure that competition is intra-ethnic, and express concern that others might misinterpret their self-esteem as defiance and give them trouble on the streets or football fields (Battaglia 1986, 20–21). Insecurity inevitably reinforces identity. At the same time, connections with others are generally considered advantageous and prestigious, but difficult to obtain, retain, and trust.

In the smaller towns the formalities of culture contact are more apparent and less anonymous—and less fraught with tension—as in Wewak:

"Although there was ordinarily only minimal interaction between these Papua New Guineans, such as an occasional greeting in Pidgin English, most knew each other, often by name, and certainly by village or region of origin and by area of residence" (Gewertz and Errington 1991, 103). The external world is most likely to be perceived geographically, but that geography is contingent on ethnicity, and highly flexible, alongside the terminology and use of *wantoks*.

Encounters between Melanesians and Europeans (and other migrant groups) are almost entirely generated in the context of employment and commerce. Other elements of social life demonstrate the fragility of such contacts; for example, at rugby league matches (the dominant male sport in Papua New Guinea) crowd and players are Melanesian, but referee and touch judges often European. So rare and tangential are such interracial contacts that most analysts of Melanesian life ignore their occurrence and significance. Asian groups are more often recent arrivals, intendedly transient, and largely introspective. For some Europeans, many of whom prefer the anonymity of supermarkets to the necessary contact and dialogue of markets, the "other" is visible only through windows or from afar. In 1920 an angry resident wrote to the *Papuan Courier*, "Although we are in a native country, we have not the desire to be amongst native-inhabited buildings along the foreshore or within the town limits, and desire less to be continually annoyed by coloured folk permitted within the town vicinity" (quoted in Inglis 1974, 48-49). In some respects little has changed; there is continuity rather than disjuncture.

Housing the growing Melanesian urban population has proved difficult, and because policies throughout the region have failed (Connell and Lea 1993), informal squatter settlements increasingly characterize cities. Over time, migrant cultural groups in towns may have become more rather than less concentrated, though for any single group such as Trobrianders there is considerable dispersion (Strathern 1975; Battaglia 1986) as there is even for small groups in formal housing (Connell 1988a). Urban squatter settlements have increasingly come to resemble rural villages, as kinship ties in towns become more elaborate, residential patterns replicate village life, trees and gardens reach fruition, rituals are enacted in the urban setting, incomes are turned to social objectives, urban leaders emerge, and "village" courts provide social control. Nevertheless urban Trobrianders, "if not isolated, are at least at sea when it comes to achieving the sense of collective physical boundaries and definition that hamlets

and villages provide at home" (Battaglia 1986, 10). In dispersion they have developed their traditional harvest festivals on the unpropitious dusty slopes of Port Moresby, complete with the magical stones and sexual taboos that are believed to ensure fertility. "The satisfaction people speak of in clustering yams into gardens is a response to the scatteredness of their own living arrangements" (Battaglia 1986, 10), and enacting such rituals provides a moral dimension in opposition to the dissoluteness of urban life. The Trobrianders, like so many others in town, combine nostalgia, ideology, and alienation into the retention (and modification) of custom, and the reassertion of identity.

More permanent urban residence, far from paradoxically, allows, even ensures, such efflorescences of culture and identity. Beyond cultural cohesion, the physical enactment of rituals—often with music and dance—usually generates a crowd, or at least a widespread recognition that a particular cultural group retains its traditions in some form, thus emphasizing the identities and distinctiveness of others. Identity is reinforced by the differences readily apparent in urban life and is dependent on what it excludes. Culture and ethnicity are the most essential components of personal identity, most obvious in the difficulties posed in marriages across cultural boundaries (Strathern 1975; Connell 1988a).

In the cities, social and economic relationships are largely based around a local place (a "settlement") or kinship relations that link urban and rural places (rather than on personal relationships of friendship or workplace ties). Religious cosmologies, both premodern and recent, and tradition tend to be past oriented; leadership within settlements may invoke religious beliefs (or sorcery) rather than political authority (Giddens 1992, 100–106). Urban Melanesians, like the Trobrianders in Port Moresby, define themselves through their cultural identity, in the self-esteem and pride that follows the appropriate and successful attention to tradition (however this may have been reconstructed in town).

In Port Moresby, at least, growing security concerns have provided a contrary differentiation of the city. Europeans and other expatriates have increasingly withdrawn to the confines of Tuaguba Hill and barricaded themselves behind high walls and fences, with guard dogs and elaborate security systems of the kind found worldwide from Kingston, Jamaica, via Johannesburg, to California. Many have moved into the increasingly common tower blocks, with their shared security. Far fewer Melanesians have adopted such procedures, but local business people in particular are

as vulnerable as expatriates to the effects of violence and disturbance. Altitudinal differentiation, in diverse ways, has never been more apparent. The neocolonial city has reverted to something akin to the more segregated colonial city; as in Egypt, "The identity of the modern city is created by what it keeps out. The modernity is contingent upon the exclusion of its own opposite. In order to determine itself as the place of order, reason, propriety, cleanliness, civilisation and power, it must represent outside itself what is irrational, disordered, dirty, libidinous, barbarian and cowed" (T. Mitchell 1988, 165). The "other" in Melanesian cities may not be cowed, but such representations explain the elite distaste for the "disorder" of squatter settlements (and therefore opposition to them), in terms of the reluctance to condone their presence or provide them with services. In quite different ways, security and tradition enable the replication of the old order.

Life in Melanesian cities may be more exciting than a rural existence but may also be hard. Most urban residents, especially those in the squatter settlements, come from relatively marginal areas where income-earning opportunities are few—usually remote places or outlying islands, rather than places where cash cropping has been successful. Migrants from such areas, where social services like education are inadequate, are poorly equipped to gain employment and cope with urban life. City incomes are often barely adequate to support them, let alone provide for remittances to rural kin. Not only is urban life difficult, it may also be dangerous. Crime is more common in urban areas, as are street gangs, and there is a widespread perception, given credence in films like *Cowboy and Maria in Town* (McLaren 1991), that urban life is violent and rural life relatively harmonious (eg, Kulick 1993) with the added benefit of plenty of food. This rhetorical view remains strong even among those with little or no experience of it (Ryan 1989, 22). Even the anthropologists Gewertz and Errington, going from the town of Wewak to the Chambri Lakes of rural Sepik, recognized the relative abundance of food: "a vivid picture of an original affluent society" (1991, 106). Although such affluence may be implausible (Dennett and Connell 1988), commitment to urban life is far less than absolute with such an ideology powerfully in place.

Ideology, and hence ethnic identity, is powerfully reinforced for those—particularly the children born in town—who have had no personal and direct experience of "home" areas in their everyday life. Children are often sent to board with grandparents, especially when their linguistic skills are

weak. For example, a Sepik woman, whose eight-year-old son asked *what* her home village was, removed the child from school in mid-term and sent him back to her village, to remain there “until he knew where everything was and what everything looked like” (Gewertz and Errington 1991, 116). Knowledge of place is central to authority and power (Rodman 1992, 651), a situation that produced the plaintive comment of a Melanesian in the New Caledonian city of Noumea: “amidst *coutume* [tradition] I am someone; in town I am nothing” (Connell 1988b, 236)—an exaggeration, but an obvious one. In town, *coutume* becomes central to identity.

Many without substantial incomes choose to remain in town, despite the pervasive nostalgia for rural life. Long-term Chambri migrants in Wewak, chose “freedom,” escape from big-men (and their perceived arbitrary social control) and from sorcerers. Yet, despite this urban preference, which was a function of the life cycle, being most appropriate to young men and women without husbands, none rejected their Chambri identity. In fifteen years Gewertz and Errington “met only one adult Chambri who said he rejected his identity as a Chambri, including those claims other Chambri might make on him” (1991, 116–117). Even this unique rejection was contextual; his redefinition of self was also partial and caused him disquiet. For Hageners (from the rural areas of Mount Hagen), staying in town has similar diverse explanations (Strathern 1975, 410). Though there are “incipient townsmen” (Strathern 1975, 411), townsmen are more often temporary, even if they seek and prefer permanence (Connell 1988a), do not discount or ignore their cultural identity (Ryan 1989), or have a choice in the matter. “The message from most townsmen [is] pretty clear, that a person’s proper place was back in the village. The fact that one was addicted to town life was nothing to be proud of” (Levine and Levine 1979, 1).

Some urban Melanesians have sought to disavow rural life, ethnic identity, and cultural commitment and have adopted urban lifestyles. Such people, and their household members, perceive rural commitment as irksome and unnecessary in an era of modernization. They stress that rural folk should work hard, be self-reliant, and not wait for the government or kin to help them. Invariably they have succeeded in a career, as the following example demonstrates:

AA is a university graduate, who has worked for fifteen years in the private sector in three different Papua New Guinea towns. His wife, MM, comes from

the same village. They have four children, all of whom go to international schools, where they mix with European and other elite children; they go to these schools because they are perceived to be prestigious and because they give the children a good chance to acquire the skills that will also give them an urban future. They speak to their children in English, using *tokples* between themselves when they prefer the children not to understand, dress relatively formally, have a large car and house, with its *boi haus*, where their servants live. Their house is among other large houses, most of whose occupants are similarly successful Melanesians. Since they live hundreds of kilometers from the village, their visits are infrequent, and they send cash only to AA's elderly mother.

AA and MM have done virtually all they can to distance themselves from village life. Yet they eat their meals, decorate their house, and attend church in Melanesian style. Their relatives and other urban *wantoks* visit them, address the children in *tokples*, and discuss rural affairs. Only a degree of distance from village and rural ideology is possible in the first generation, and most Melanesian urban residents belong to this group. Gang members in Port Moresby, however, are part of another group, composed mainly of those born and raised in the city and said to be "largely alienated from their 'home' areas and customs. Thus, while they may maintain the ethnic sensibility which characterises Papua New Guinea society in general, they share a transcendent urban lifestyle and world view, which . . . overrides the divisions which commonly exist between ethnic groups" (Goddard 1992, 23). Nonetheless, beyond the gang members, some Melanesians are now retiring and choosing to stay in the city; a few are even being buried there.

For all their inability to differentiate themselves fully from the rural sector, Melanesians such as AA and MM have established a very different lifestyle to that of their parents and many of their peers. They have kin, friends, and colleagues. This "apartness" is clearly recognized in the villages, where people see such lifestyles as attempts by their practitioners to put themselves above rural folk; this distinction is symbolized in the Tok Pisin term *susokman*, which does not apply to thong-wearing or barefooted villagers. Urban Hageners assumed that those wearing socks and sunglasses must have ready cash (Strathern 1975, 233). The enigma of Hagen identity is vividly depicted in the persona of Joe Leahy, a mixed-blood plantation owner, part of whose life has been documented in the films *Joe Leahy's Neighbours* and *Black Harvest* (Connolly and Anderson

1989, 1992), which emphasize his ambiguous relations with his Melanesian relatives. "He is not simply an eccentric or acculturated individual [and] it remains uncertain whether Joe Leahy is a Melanesian capitalist or a capitalist Melanesian—a *new* kind of Big Man, still bound in complex ways to his jealous, more traditional neighbours. He is, and is not, of the local culture" (Clifford 1992, 102). In town, at least geographical separation is more feasible. An elite choose to distance themselves behind darkened windscreens in air-conditioned cars, sure targets for the gang rascals, envious and unimpressed with such alienation. In political and bureaucratic circles, elite males are now adding neckties to their ensemble (in the face of calls by one politician for a national dress). In dress, lifestyle, and language (the elite refuse to speak Pidgin, recent migrants may not yet have learned it)—reflections on the economic sphere—there are vast differences within Melanesian cities.

The notion that there should be a "national dress" is symptomatic of attempts to create national identities in Melanesia. In the past, efforts to agree on a national flag, anthem, or even the name of a country, at least in the case of Papua New Guinea, proved extraordinarily difficult, while agreement on a national language has never been reached. The problem of symbols reflects the problems of nation-building—to date an exercise that has largely been unsuccessful (Feinberg 1990). In countries of considerable physical, but particularly ethnic and cultural diversity, where contact, development, and decolonization have all come late, the task of creating a nation and a national identity is enormous. Even the circumstances of early urban life slowed nationalism; the towns were expected to be "the crucibles of nationhood" (Ward 1970, 58). For Melanesians, "the texture of their urban existence must surely be one of the most important reasons for the slow development of nationalism among a people who were never allowed to mix freely together away from home, and to meet people from far-distant places" (Wolfers 1975, 50), other than on some plantations. More recently, the design of national symbols—the parliament houses—of the new states has proved difficult because of their importance in contexts where Melanesian cities (especially outside the capitals) lack corporate municipal institutions and especially the imposing public buildings that might contain an institution and represent it (see T. Mitchell 1988, 59). Moreover, even what passed for a semblance of colonial planning has been overwhelmed by the infilling and largely unforeseen urban consolidation of squatter settlements in the marginal sites ignored by the formal

sector. The designs of parliament houses were crucial for the democratic theme of unity in diversity; in Papua New Guinea the design was strongly challenged on the grounds that its style represented just one region (Rosi 1991). The symbols of national identity have been difficult to achieve.

Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands gained independence without struggle and with some internal resistance to what was perceived as an inappropriate and precipitous rush; Vanuatu gained this status more belatedly, in the face of opposition from France, one of the two colonizing powers. Nationalism acquires its greatest legitimacy when ethnic boundaries do not cut across political ones (Gellner 1983), but in Melanesia "the great extent to which peoples' sense of self remains bound up in the gross actualities of blood, race, language, locality, religion or tradition" (Geertz 1973, 258) limits the extent to which individuals might identify with a wider entity. At best the partial mixing of cultures and the rise of lingua franca have created the possibility of families of culture (A. Smith 1990, 188) or "nested cultural identities" (Linnekin 1992); in Melanesia, these have usually taken a subnational form, most obviously in Bougainville, where the greater ethnic consciousness that followed more diverse contact with other parts of Papua New Guinea, stimulated secessionism in defense of identity (Nash and Ogan 1990). Moreover, to enact and seek to restore elements of tradition and custom, essential components of the search for nationalism, is at once to follow the rules of everyday life and to assert political autonomy (Connell 1988b; Keesing 1982b). Throughout Melanesia it is apparent that, despite the familiar term *nation-state*, there can be no presumption that where there is a state there is necessarily a nation. Few if any nations are more imagined than those of Melanesia.

Melanesia is typified by the extent of social differentiation across small areas, and by such late and often limited contact with the global economy and society that these distinctions retain extraordinary vitality. The speed of development is well summarized in the title of the autobiography of former Papua New Guinea minister of foreign affairs, the late Sir Albert Maori Kiki: *Ten Thousand Years in a Lifetime* (1968). Travel documentaries conflict with this view and emphasize another Melanesia, a distinctive region characterized by labels such as "stone age society," "unchanged over time," and so on. A largely absent tourism has as yet barely exploited these themes in "the land of the unexpected" (see Errington and Gewertz 1988). Such inauthenticity, the Melanesian world as exhibition, engenders curiosity, degradation, and spectacle: the realm of the "other," rendered in

perpetuity by film, photograph, and video (Kulick and Willson 1992). It also emphasizes the supposed timelessness of Melanesia, as one personal history documents: *Long Ago Is Far Away* (Hope 1979). Nibbrig's (1992) unreflexive reference to "Paradise" is just one recent example. Despite the occasional barbaric elements (eg, cannibalism), the sorts of self-contained, precapitalist totalities that follow from these perceptions have acquired the awful handicap of having to satisfy a yearning for a lost age of innocence and order (Derrida 1976, 114–115; Taussig 1980).

Early ethnographies, such as those of Malinowski, despite his views of "savages," had a similar impact on the construction of utopias (Trouillot 1991). Not only can this not be, but the kind of autonomy sought by most Melanesians is quite different and is not based on ideas of remoteness and pristine splendor, as was most apparent when the remote Hagahai, barely known to their neighbors, sought to "enter the world" in search of medicine for the malaria that had been transmitted to them (Jenkins 1987). Rather than escape from historical process, people wish to engage more fully with it and become prime negotiators. Since this cannot happen, disengagement occurs as often as incorporation (Townsend 1980), in a constant process of conservation and dissolution. "Every longing for change carries with it apprehension, the ambivalence of wishing to adopt and reap new rewards yet also wanting to hold past certainties. Acceptance and hostility are two sides of the one coin" (Hempenstall and Rutherford 1984, 126). Disengagement and the visible effects of disruption have assisted in the romanticization and generation of utopias in the historic Pacific by insiders and outsiders.

In almost every context, tribal and regional affiliations are more important than national identity. Hirsch (1990) has argued that the spread of betel-nut consumption in Papua New Guinea (and its emergence as a commodity sufficiently important to be part of the consumer price index!) is part of a potential, but still incipient, national process toward the establishment of a formative national culture, where a system of ideas and practices has a roughly uniform significance in many different places. Betel nut has emerged as a central object of consumption because of its associations with authority, politics, and "civilized" behavior, themes that are also associated with Port Moresby, where its use is considerable and where many are introduced to its delights. In Vanuatu, kava drinking fulfills a similar role. The same might be said of rice consumption, much more pervasive than betel nut (and around which there are national obses-

sions with self-reliance), attendance at church, or the dominance of rugby league (at least in Papua New Guinea). As much as anything else, the culture of popular music has both contributed to some measure of national identity and is very much an urban phenomenon. In mid-March 1993, the Papua New Guinea national Top Twenty contained "Heal Our Nation" (Higher Vision), "Swit Bougainville" (Trouble Zone Band), "Peace in PNG" (Telek and Friends), alongside several *tokples* songs and reggae derivatives (*TPNG*, 1 April 1993.) In this relatively novel form of mass culture, the almost everyday practices of ordinary people are transforming global culture into local or national culture, constantly modifying and reinventing new modes of urban culture and providing "shreds of content" (Jameson 1979, 44) for the articulation of nationalism. The cultural significance of these and other practices in town is nonetheless generally marginal rather than central, and their role in stimulating national identity is superficial. It is still evident that people labeled as Papua New Guineans—or other Melanesian nationals—are found outside and not within the country.

Though the lone Chambri, AA, MM, and others may have distanced themselves from their cultural identities, the anomie and loneliness they experience is partly a result of the impossibility of gaining a new identity, let alone a national identity. They cannot be anything other than Chambri, Hageners, and so on, and in subsequent generations there may even be some reassertion and revival of a symbolic ethnic identity (Gans 1979). Even urban-born gang members maintained "ethnic sensitivity" (Goddard 1992, 23). Cultural diversity—without multiculturalism—ensures that ethnic identity triumphs over class, meaning over employment; tension, conflict, and the search for order foster exclusion and tradition in a variety of forms.

CITIES APART?

Petroleum may be regarded as the pearl shell of industrial civilisation. The avarice it evokes, the ruthlessness with which government bureaucrats and multinational corporations compete over it, and the political forces, rivalries and skulduggery that are called into play in the process are the modern versions of life in the Waga and Nembi Valleys [Southern Highlands] in the late 1930s. These corporate struggles carried on from lofty glass buildings, plotted with the aid of computers, organised through satellite links, and fought by

warriors who arrive on executive-class flights—all take place beyond the peripheries of the people who inhabit the regions concerned. The direction of their future will be decided in deals struck between bureaucrats in Port Moresby and executives in London, Sydney and New York, by people they don't know about and will never see. It might as well be the spirit world. (Schieffelin and Crittenden 1991, 282)

If Melanesian cities are intricately subdivided, with ethnicity and cultural identity prevailing over class divisions, they are assuredly part of a postcolonial world that has contributed to urbanization and to as yet hesitant and undefined movements toward the formation of national and regional cultures and identities. They are nevertheless part of the world system. The economies of the Melanesian states, and especially the cities—the entrepôts and administrative centers—depend on fluctuations in the world capitalist system. Notwithstanding the continued significance of subsistence economies throughout Melanesia, the trade systems and price fluctuations (that cannot be influenced by Melanesia's marginal presence), and whose terms of trade disadvantage commodity producers, have embedded towns, cities, and villages in a global economic, cultural, and political system (Jameson 1986, xiv). The debate about the extent of the globalization of culture, and especially of politics, is endless.

The nature of the world economy and society and whether such notions exist, make sense, or are envisaged in similar ways in different places, are highly problematic questions. Is the modernity that emerged in Europe around the seventeenth century (and subsequently evolved in space and time), the same modernity that belatedly reached much of Melanesia in the mid-twentieth century? Has Melanesia adopted modernity, let alone moved on to embrace an era suggested by terms such as "information society" and "consumer society," or to the era of "postmodernity," "postindustrial," "postcapitalist" or "post-Fordist," that suggests the period of modernization is over? (Giddens 1992, 1–2). Given that most such phrases cover a proliferation of meanings, there are few grounds for optimism that the diversity of Melanesia can easily be incorporated in this global discourse. In a cultural world of such variety, where contemporary actions and events are often poorly understood, and can only with difficulty be grounded in local epistemologies, cities and societies appear to be as much part of a premodern world as they are of a postmodern one.

Melanesia and its cities are part—though very much a peripheral part—of the world capitalist economy. Despite the recency of modern economic

development, the dominance and significance of the world economy is most apparent in Melanesia because of the limited importance in the region of the state, itself a function not only of newly won independence (and lack of nationalism), but also of shortages of bureaucratic and political skills and the clamor for foreign investment. The Melanesian states are peripheral in the sense that foreign investment is concentrated in resource-based activities like mining and forestry, and also insofar as this investment generates most exports. Manufactured export products are conspicuous by their absence. There is no internal economic hegemony to speak of and only rare attempts to flex national if not local muscles against multinational corporations. All of these characteristics are particularly striking in countries where most people live without many of the benefits of modern technology (other than the radio that provides a powerful link with the "global village").

Throughout the region modernity has resulted in a disjuncture between space and place. In premodern times space and place largely coincided, because the spatial dimensions of social life were for most dominated by localized activities. External links were tenuous and often highly dangerous, epitomized by the "barter markets [where] traders laid down their goods and withdrew to a safe distance while the exchange was made" (Gewertz 1978). In the Highlands of Papua New Guinea people married their enemies. Modernity disrupted the relationship between space and place, and migration led to crucial relationships developing with "absent" kin, the Melanesians whose "dual dependency" ensured that they migrate for cash but return for security. Subsequently, economic relationships, notably commodity pricing in one form or another, have influenced local life for almost every Melanesian society. As D. Mitchell, in New York, wrote somewhat erroneously of the Nagovisi of Bougainville two decades ago, and with a large degree of hyperbole:

Decisions made in Chicago, in London, in New York, determine the price of cocoa and a producing area as small as Nagovisi can have no hope of influencing such decisions. . . . Indeed, the Chicago Board of Trade located not 500 miles from where I am writing is a larger factor in their lives and world, some 12,000 miles away, than it is in mine. (Mitchell 1976, 142, 148)

Moreover, the introduction into villages—far beyond the towns—of the money acquired elsewhere frequently generated an efflorescence of the village-based gift economy (Carrier and Carrier 1989), as people amplified

and made sense of their relations with capitalism. More directly, the village trade stores have become the final points of distribution in the world system; their goods, with their distant origins, are the symbols and substance of the diverse structure of incorporation and accommodation (McInnes and Connell 1988). In a sense, place has become "increasingly phantasmagoric" (Giddens 1992, 19; cf. Rodman 1992, 646) as localities are thoroughly penetrated and influenced by very distinct social, political, and economic influences, whose genesis and local ramifications are often beyond comprehension.

Changes inevitably produce contrasts between modernity and tradition; indeed tradition can only be comprehended in relation to modernity, hence the ubiquity of the Pidgin terms *pasin* or *kastom* throughout Melanesia. In contemporary Melanesian society, tradition continues to play a role. In most circumstances it is more likely to be rendered as *pasin bilong mipela* 'the way we do things'; it has not always been reinvented or codified. Moreover the binary division between "tradition" as variable inheritance, history and a lived past, and "tradition" as invariant, invented, rhetorical, and self-conscious contemporary practice is clearly a false one (Jolly 1992). Equally, "difference is encountered in the adjoining neighbourhoods, the familiar turns up at the ends of the earth" (Clifford 1988, 13). The shift from "tradition" to "modernity" is enormously complex—in time and space—and, in any case, no one in Melanesia lives, or has lived, without some awareness of cultural (and more recently, economic) alternatives. Among the Sa'a of Solomon Islands, as elsewhere, migration has contributed to the shift toward modernity: "It has moved Sa'a and other groups from the trajectory of their own internal evolution onto a course of accelerated development. This change tips the balance of power in new directions. It removes power from the hands of the older generation whose dispositions and practices now confront a new environment, distant from the social world which originally instilled them and to which they are objectively tailored" (Meltzoff and Lipuma 1986, 55).

For the Sa'a there has been no going back, no disengagement, and objectivity has become subjectivity. "As this process moves both ways, it preserves, while at the same time amputating the principles which used to underpin the thoughts and workings of a society in order to withstand the march of history" (Godelier 1986, 206). History no longer marches onward in linear progression. Knowledge and technologies are selectively incorporated, transformed and transcended, reinterpreted and imbued

with a particular significance for local social practice. Culture and identity are not direct products of new, increasingly global economic (and perhaps political) arrangements—and their sociospatial impact on the material form and social structure of cities (M. P. Smith 1992)—but are shaped by the everyday practices of ordinary people and their feelings and understanding of their conditions of existence.

In a sense “globalisation—which is a process of uneven development that fragments as it coordinates—introduces new forms of world interdependence, in which, once again, there are no ‘others’ ” (Giddens 1992, 175). Yet, as Schieffelin and Crittenden (1991) and Kulick (1993) have made clear, the globalization of social and economic life is far from complete; many people, especially in Melanesia, are very distant both in space and impact from the institutional transformations of modernity. Time-space compression is not apparent there (Massey 1992, 9). Much more important there are reactions against, and responses to, modernity. The processes of development have mapped out a contested landscape of environmental, economic, and cultural change, dramatically apparent around the Bougainville copper mine. (In the past five years, identities in this part of Melanesia, especially, have been challenged, put at risk, and redefined, as the weak have wielded their weapons and flexed their muscles). Nevertheless, all Melanesian cultures are products of a history of appropriation, resistance, and accommodation.

An extraordinary complexity of social movements exists on the periphery; the struggles for transformation have taken diverse forms, but few are urban, women’s, ecological or, in a broad sense, concerned with human rights (see Slater 1992, 311). The complex struggle in Bougainville epitomizes Appadurai’s general notion that ethnicity has become a powerful global force and, here as elsewhere, “state and nation are at each other’s throats” (1990, 304). Local struggles of resistance are more important than either regional, class, or gender issues as the battle for an ethnic identity, in Bougainville and elsewhere, demonstrates (Samana 1988).

Global culture, economy, and society have come to Melanesia. Satellite dishes bring Indonesian and Australian television channels; rugby league (sponsored by Winfield cigarettes) is the male national sport in Papua New Guinea, with unwanted results generating clan warfare and team colors incorporated into women’s net bags (O’Hanlon 1993, 67, 73). New lingua franca enable accommodation to overcome elements of incomprehension. Nevertheless intermittent “cargo cults,” whose very terminology

(and practice) mark the extent of dissonance with the received world, demonstrate the differences that remain. However, "contemporary communications have collapsed the 'usual space and time boundaries' and produced both a new internationalism and internal differentiations within cities and societies based on place, function and social interest" (Harvey 1989, 75), but such "usual" space and time boundaries were never immutable. (Sweet potato, introduced into seventeenth-century Papua New Guinea, was a critical factor in some of the most striking changes of all in precolonial Melanesia.) Social relationships were invariably highly flexible to accommodate shifting allegiances, opportunities, and domestic events, including natural disasters: "polyphonic patterns of accommodation and resistance to domination" (Smith 1992, 496). While it may be extraordinarily difficult to represent differences in the larger and more impersonal global context adequately, thus demanding a focus on reflexivity (eg, Strathern 1992), despite various forms of resistance and accommodation, Melanesian cities—and the rural hinterlands beyond—are very much part of, and not apart from, world systems.

CITIES IN DISARRAY

An important outcome after the changeover from colony to independent statehood in the 1960s and 1970s was a rapid weakening in the inherited mechanisms that governed urban development. Western urban planning systems are both prescriptive and proscriptive and depend ultimately on popular acceptance of government intervention in everyday life. Such interference is tolerated because local government is usually reasonably responsive to local wishes and its powers are clearly defined. Urban management is one facet of a complete system of local governance, and alterations to some of its parts affect the whole. Rarely have municipal governments in the primate cities of small developing countries enjoyed the preconditions necessary for them to operate effectively. They are commonly subjugated by the national government located in the same city and make do with scant resources. In some situations there are simply not enough suitable applicants able and willing to stand for election given the alternative opportunities open to such people in the public and private sectors and in the national government. In Melanesia the change in municipal affairs was seen primarily in the declining control over regulations, with reduced attention paid to land use zoning and building bylaws, and also in

the failure to maintain and provide for the major urban infrastructure of roads, water supplies, and sewage treatment. This did not result entirely from changed priorities, a shortage of funds for urban investment, or the adoption of new principles, but was rather the outcome of ignoring rules created to manage urban affairs in a different political context.

Only since the 1960s has there been significant urbanization in Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, and Vanuatu. In the past especially, many largely institutional factors discouraged permanent urban residence. No social security or welfare systems existed to provide for urban living when an individual was unemployed or had retired. Many urban workers were in "tied" accommodation, where housing is associated with the job, and others lived in squatter settlements where their occupation of land was without formal tenure and legally insecure (Connell and Lea 1993, 53-54). Urban life was largely transient and experimental, in an ideological context where the only true home was a rural one. Before or around the time of independence, the removal or ignoring of the institutional factors that inhibited urbanization contributed toward the huge increase throughout the region in the proportion of the population living in town (Table 1), especially in informal squatter settlements. In itself this urban growth has contributed to the tasks of urban management and planning.

Despite official concern over unmanaged urbanization, alongside an expressed focus on rural development, few real attempts have been made to constrain urban development. Urbanization has been limited primarily because of reasonable income-earning opportunities in many rural areas. The options available to Melanesian governments include increasing expenditure on rural infrastructure and development, rural-urban terms of trade, wage and housing policies. Despite intermittent orientation of economic policy toward rural development, expenditure in urban areas has tended to be quite disproportionate to urban population sizes. In the case of Papua New Guinea, only exceptionally crude "last resort" repatriation of some migrants from the North Solomons (Bougainville), and physical destruction of some settlements, suggest some measure of determination to stem urbanization (Connell and Lea 1993, 81-90). Without rural incentives, such draconian political measures are of limited utility and have merely created dissent.

Attention has often been drawn to the constant breakdowns in basic urban services and the deterioration in infrastructure provision and maintenance that have characterized most third world cities in the postcolonial

Table 1. Population of Urban Centers in Melanesia

<i>Papua New Guinea*</i>	1980	1990
Port Moresby (NCD)	123,624	194,295
Lae	61,617	80,655
Madang	21,335	27,057
Wewak	19,890	23,224
Mount Hagen	13,441	18,977
Goroka	18,511	18,368
Rabaul	14,954	18,186
Daru	7,127	8,490
Kimbe	4,662	8,363
Vanimo	3,071	7,908
Popondetta	6,429	7,627
Bulolo	6,730	7,421
Kavieng	4,633	6,486
Alotau	4,311	6,435
Mendi	4,130	6,192
Lorengau	4,547	5,804
<i>Solomon Islands†</i>	1976	1986
Honiara	14,933	30,413
Gizo	1,596	3,710
Auki	1,225	3,252
Kirakira	561	2,586
<i>Vanuatu</i>	1979	1989
Port Vila	14,598	19,311
Luganville	5,183	6,983

Notes: The table excludes some large peri-urban populations where many of the worst cases of lack of service and infrastructure provision exist.

*Papua New Guinea towns with less than 5,000 are excluded from this table, as are towns in North Solomons Province. The largest of these are Tabubil (4,670), Kiunga (4,000), Kundiawa (3,987), Kerema (3,950), and Wau (4,268). Some urban populations are known to have been undercounted in the 1990 census; Lae almost certainly had a population then of more than 95,000.

†Solomon Island towns with less than 2,000 people are excluded; they are Buala (1,901), Tulagi (1,622), and Lata (1,295).

Source: Connell and Lea 1993, 39–41.

era. Despite the small size of towns and the recency of urbanization, such conditions are also found in Melanesia—where urban heritage is being made on the run. Formed around the rights or non-rights of urban residents to customary land, a distinctive form of urbanization has appeared. Cities are characterized by rapidly growing uncontrolled fringes of peri-urban customary land, settlements on marginal land beyond the reaches of the formal housing sector, and pockets of traditional villages now swallowed up in the expanding modern town. Modern offices, new tourist establishments, and the expensive dwellings of the elite (still largely expatriate in most of the region) coexist with the low-income Melanesian suburbs and place huge demands on poorly developed networks of infrastructural services. This complex and highly differentiated urban mosaic is rarely under the jurisdiction of a single municipal authority and is the chief theatre of operations for a host of national government agencies, nongovernment organizations, and landowning groups. Sustained maintenance and management of urban services appears an unrealistic dream. City government is associated with poor or nonexistent coordination and scarce and inadequate financial resources.

Although urban communities are very sensitive to falling service standards and declining infrastructure provision, there is also a somewhat blind faith in the need for the government to take action and to formulate new policies. Much of the problem may be more fundamental and point to the need for changes in the structure of government itself.

Squatter settlements in much of Melanesia are widely perceived to be haunts of the unemployed and criminals, though there is no real evidence of this in cities that are characterized overall by large numbers of unemployed and underemployed. At least in Port Moresby, this correlation was invalid in the 1970s (Connell and Curtain 1982) and is probably equally invalid now (Goddard 1992, 21). The limited data in support of it did not prevent gratuitous assumptions being made then and in subsequent years. Thus, in Solomon Islands “the drift toward the towns with its concomitants of shanty towns and urban crime is less marked than in Papua New Guinea or Fiji” (Potterton 1979, 24). There is still no evidence that crime levels, or gang membership, are correlated with settlement residence (Goddard 1992; Nibbrig 1992). It is not implausible, however, that social disorganization and crime are a function of substantial inequalities in access to employment, land, housing, and other services in the largest cities, which would explain its greater significance in Papua New Guinea.

Certainly some criminals themselves have pointed to crime being a response to inequalities, their perceptions of corruption, and so on. At the same time, "a constant sabotage of facilities in the low income housing areas adds to worse conditions in these localities. These unlawful actions are deliberately caused to show frustration with lack of attention by the local authority" (Aruga 1992, 3-4). Crime tends to exacerbate the deprivation experienced in settlements and to make them a source of greater concern among other urban residents. Paradoxically, however, as always, "Everyone blames the squatters for the sudden increase in crime. Some have petitioned the government to get rid of these settlements, yet politicians visit these same places at election time with money, beer and rice bags to win their vote" (*TPNG*, 25 Oct 1984.) Media reports in Papua New Guinea regularly plead for firm government action, oblivious it seems to the effects of a permissive political environment in postcolonial times.

A state of emergency for the National Capital District is long overdue. It is in the city of Port Moresby where ordinary people live in constant fear of their lives and property. We cannot and will not contain the criminal situation in this land unless the government stops the urban drift of people from the villages. The government needs to be courageous in weeding out the unemployed people in Port Moresby as well as in other urban centres back to their home provinces and villages now, not in ten years time. (*TPNG*, 3 Jan 1991)

Squatters are part of an entrenched constituency in postcolonial Melanesia that cannot be sorted out by attempts at social engineering of a kind that might have been possible in former times. To advocate repatriation is to assume the social, political, and institutional means are present (Connell and Lea 1993, 81-90). These modern fears and concerns, especially in Papua New Guinea, have contributed substantially to limited interest in and expenditure on the poorest parts of cities.

Another factor contributing to urban mismanagement is the seeming lack of coordination among the various branches of government responsible for urban development. The plight of local government in the provincial town of Mount Hagen in the Papua New Guinea Highlands is representative:

Of particular concern is the present fragmentation involved in deciding the "use" of land in the town. Three separate "Boards" are involved: Land Board, Town Planning Board . . . and Building Board, each established under separate Acts of the National Parliament. The major problem is that each respec-

tive body does not coordinate with the other. . . . Due to these legislative deficiencies, the lack of a town plan for the use of Mount Hagen, and the fragmented system of land use development, and because the situation has existed for many years, we are now faced with an insufficient sewerage system, inadequate distribution of water supply, no drainage system, crowded settlements on the fringes of the town. (MHTA 1991, 9–10)

The difficulties lie deeper than a lack of coordination and include the capabilities of local governance itself. Elected municipal local government has not traveled particularly well from its colonial cultural origins in Europe to a postcolonial Melanesia. Good planning presumes an ability to decide for the collective good of all in the city and to manage the outcomes. This has proved very difficult in small countries where there is scarcely room or suitable personnel for two levels of government in the capital city (municipal and national). The result is domination by central government and its consequent and often inappropriate involvement in municipal affairs. The future of urban management in Melanesia is very much bound up with the ability of urban authorities to become more self-sufficient. The potential for achieving this self-sufficiency depends on a complex set of factors at the national, provincial, and local levels. Sources of revenue are taxes (licenses), fees (for service provision), and grants, but taxes and fees are hard to collect and grants difficult to obtain. Solutions materialize in episodic and expensive responses to crisis conditions, without reference to the wider context of urban service provision. Urban management becomes crisis management, rather than the good housekeeping that might avert the worst crises, and emphasizes grandiose “solutions” rather than planned development.

Management problems are visible in the housing situation. Throughout Melanesia problems of access to housing exist; both social and physical variations in character within towns are partly determined by and partly reflected in the availability and provision of housing. Within the towns and cities enormous differences in residential standards are observable. In Port Moresby, for example, the range is from the extremely expensive homes and multistory luxury flats of Tuaguba Hill, through low-cost National Housing Commission buildings, to the flimsy plywood and other constructions of shantytowns (Lea 1983), which represent the most rapidly growing proportion of the urban housing stock. Similar but much less marked distinctions exist in Suva, Honiara, and elsewhere; indeed, in Honiara, much “temporary” housing is of a relatively high standard.

Everywhere such "marginal" housing reflects status: illegal or barely tolerated and consequently insecure. Even between settlements there are enormous differences; the provision of finance for housing is a political issue, funds are scarce, and because some settlements are populated by groups believed to be troublemakers and criminals, their claims on finance for residential improvement are less likely to be met. Scarcity of finance and therefore of housing (and related services) reflects and often entrenches urban inequalities.

Squatter settlements have sprung up around every town in this country before and since Independence. Over the years, they have expanded, even intruding into customary land as increasing numbers of grassroots people have drifted into towns in search of a better life. These days, they have come to be regarded as breeding grounds for criminals. Settlements have been the subject of many studies, with numerous reports highlighting the problems associated with them. But successive governments have not bothered about coming up with a clear policy on how to deal with them. Many leaders have relied on these settlements for votes to get into power, but apart from putting in limited services no policy has been formulated about the future of these settlements within the overall framework of urban development. Settlements will continue to expand, and it is in the best interest of the nation that a comprehensive policy be adopted to formalise any future expansion and ensure that people live in proper homes with proper services. The continuing lack of such a policy can only lead to serious problems for the country. (*Post Courier*, 15 Oct 1992)

Although the problems are more serious in Papua New Guinea, and the need for coherent housing policy is great, there are implications here for other parts of Melanesia. At best, recent policies toward settlements can be described as benign neglect. The policies are rarely the problem, but an institutional paralysis has prevented action. Within the settlements, paralysis has stimulated collaboration, networking, and self-help—both legal and illegal. A testimony to the resourcefulness of the poor in the cities of Melanesia is that they have found ways to house themselves that are appropriate, flexible, and of a higher standard than in some other parts of the world.

The same problems of mismanagement and institutional paralysis are apparent for other forms of service provision. Despite the international priority given to the supply of adequate water and sanitation facilities, little evidence suggests that these and other basic needs have any real priority in Melanesia, except when services break down. Evidence abounds of

less-than-adequate investment in service provision in many key areas: water supplies, sewage facilities, and environmental management (street and stream cleaning and garbage disposal). Provision for open space, transport services, health centers, roads, and electricity is similarly inadequate. Moreover, access to formal housing correlates very strongly with access to other urban services. Historically in developing countries, the best water supply and sewerage or sanitation services were commonly provided to the more affluent areas of cities, even though these areas might be more expensive to service from an engineering perspective (Ludwig and Browder 1992), because they were often on hilltops; correspondingly, poorer areas were supplied inadequately or intermittently.

The city authorities of Port Moresby have to seriously address the future of a safe reliable water supply to the city. . . . The water system is now over thirty years old and can no longer cope with the increasing demands of the 195,000 consumers in the city and its environs. The city's excuse about old water pipes and not enough pressure to fill up the reservoirs is beginning to wear thin now. This is becoming apparent by the senseless acts of vandalism that occur to the pipes each time water supply to parts of the city is disrupted for longer than a day . . . it is time to stop and start some serious constructive planning for the future. (*TPNG*, 16 July 1992)

Central to the Port Moresby water-supply problem is that the existing system was designed for a small town of around sixty thousand in the 1960s, and in the subsequent thirty years no major upgrading of the system has been undertaken to meet increased demand from the growing population. In situations of reduced water supply, frequent in one of the driest cities in Melanesia, the tower blocks of the affluent metaphorically drain the water supplies from the poor. The same is broadly true in other places, as the public works systems installed in colonial times creak and rust into obsolescence. Leaks, storm overflows, shortages in dry weather, aging and damaged assets (including tadpoles in the water pipes), illegal connections, and failures to collect revenue have all exacerbated the basic problems.

Conditions elsewhere are very similar, and few places possess proper sewage treatment facilities. Neither Port Vila nor any of the other urban areas in Vanuatu, for example, possesses a reticulated sewage collection and treatment system. Only Honiara does in Solomon Islands. The small township of Maprik in Papua New Guinea had to be "closed" for several

weeks in 1992 when its whole system overflowed. The only legislation specifically directed toward sanitation in Vanuatu dates from 1929 and relates to an administrative structure long defunct—a situation symptomatic of urban service provision and management throughout Melanesia. Colonial order has not survived.

Urbanization includes two key components—relatively high rates of population growth and concentration in cities—which are not synonymous. In policy terms, population growth suggests a need for population policies, whereas concentration points toward a need for decentralization and improvements in rural development (Slater 1986). Both involve a third focus for urban policy, the strengthening of municipal government and the institutions governing the delivery of urban services. None of these areas exhibits evidence of policy formulation in Melanesia, a situation that has contributed to the disarray of the cities. The lack, or ignoring, of regulations has immobilized the cities and degraded their environments. Governments have generally lost interest in, and withdrawn their funding for, urban development. Globally,

My pessimistic prediction is that by about 1995, government regulations will have been cut back a great deal and people will have been left even more to their own devices. No doubt this will have brought some benefits, especially for the affluent minority who can afford to pay for quality services. But the majority will have discovered how exploitative most illegal subdividers are, about the dangerous state in which most private companies run their buses, and how few private entrepreneurs are prepared to provide services to the unprofitable poor. (Gilbert 1992, 436)

In Melanesia the situation just described already exists, and attempts are being made to divest governments of responsibilities for some essential services. Whether this represents an admission of defeat in the face of a mounting crisis and sheer bureaucratic inertia, or a belief that some services cannot be adequately managed by governments is not clear, but the effects may be far reaching. Although attempts have been made to formulate some coherent urban policy in each of the Melanesian countries, present policies toward the management of urbanization generally consist of piecemeal plans and projects in particular towns. Coordination is conspicuous by its absence, a situation that directly reflects the condition of urban government across the region and is unlikely to change until the fundamental problem is addressed. What has been said about planning

for urbanization in developing countries in general is strikingly true of Melanesia:

What characterises most of the planning efforts in the third world is the absence of a will to plan effectively. Most urbanisation policy is unconscious, partial, uncoordinated and negative. It is unconscious in the sense that those who effect it are largely unaware of its proportions and features. It is partial in that few points at which governments might act to manage urbanisation and affect its course and direction are in fact utilised. It is uncoordinated in that national planning tends to be economic and urban planning tends to be physical and disjunction often produces competing policies. It is negative in that the ideological perspective of the planners leads them to try to divert, retard or stop urban growth and in particular to inhibit the expansion of metropolitan and primate cities. (Berry 1975, 78)

Almost twenty years later, such comments are increasingly relevant in Melanesia, especially in Papua New Guinea where cities and towns are larger and the disjuncture between economic and physical planning has widened enormously and become formalized. Current policies are largely aimed at economic growth, rather than more broadly based economic development, and are unlikely to reduce problems associated with equity and the distribution of urban and other services. Even in small towns, urban service provision is fragmented between numerous activities. Fragmentation, tension between landowners and migrants in the face of land shortages, growing urban unemployment, bureaucratic ineptitude, and political corruption—hastening privatization—have all contributed to disarray and division. Most aspects of infrastructure provision can be addressed only with the support of the urban population at large. In Melanesia, history, geography, and the gulf between “traditional” and “modern” have made the creation of this “community of interest,” or any approximation of it, extremely difficult. Diversity and spontaneity are more apparent.

CITY LIFE

Ethnic and cultural fragmentation and modernist homogenization are not two arguments, two opposing views of what is happening in the world today, but two constitutive trends of global reality. (Friedman 1990, 311)

The “last” parts of rural Melanesia were probably not “contacted” (an imprecise term) until the 1970s—in the final flurry of world exploration.

Yet throughout the region universal images, sounds, and brand-names abound: T-shirts (even Gucci and Benetton look-alikes), Toyotas, Coca-Cola, sunglasses and digital watches; Madonna—though banned from Papua New Guinea television—emanates from the same Walkmans. In this universalization, Melanesia has gone from preliteracy to postliteracy, with only a rudimentary intervening stage. Though the urban elite have ensured a degree of distinctiveness, with shirts and ties behind tinted windscreens, eating “take-away” Chinese and Kentucky Fried Chicken, and tuning in to Australian television, they do not decorate their homes with Sepik artefacts—as Europeans do—but play golf. They may travel as frequently south, as to their “home” villages, whose people and interests they so often seek to represent and benefit from.

An important gender distinction must be made here: it is men who wear ties, drive cars, and take expense-account flights south, though there are prominent women in national life. By contrast, it is women—bare-breasted, “traditionally” garbed, and ill-at-ease—who are invariably on hand at important events as decorative symbols of Papua New Guinea (other parts of Melanesia have largely abandoned this custom) in modern rituals. Nature and culture are jointly emphasized in such rare examples of Papua New Guineans dressing up as Papua New Guineans. Here too is the juxtaposition of corporate monoliths and plywood shacks, air-conditioned vehicles with bare feet—a juxtaposition not postmodernist but universal and, in different formats, long established between rich and poor. The era of late modernity, in impoverished states of the third world periphery, emphasizes such phenomena through the increasingly visible global reach. On a different scale, for a different audience, images of “tradition” are transmitted globally—through tourism, travelogue, and the splendors of tropical nature—while global culture in diverse forms flows through the satellite dishes of the cities. “Tradition” moves out as “modernity” moves in.

Consumption demarcates incipient class divisions, yet ethnicity, and gender, complicate and minimize emergent boundaries within ethnic groups. Women, more confined—especially as urban crime increases—are more conscious of identity. That elite Melanesians may be differentiated by their pattern of food consumption emphasizes that eating is a social act and an act of self-identification; in a social rather than biological sense, “you are what you eat” (Friedman 1990, 314) but not what you wear. Men dine out. In Melanesia, as elsewhere, “there is relatively little consider-

ation of how people define themselves, how identities are cobbled together to act in the new spaces of a post-fordist economy. Amidst the shards of modernist fragmentation and disengagement, how can identity be constructed at all?" (Watts 1992, 123). In states that are not nations, where tribes are also recent inventions—local and national constructs—and urbanization has preceded industrialization, the task becomes more difficult. Yet, as with the Chambri, few question who they are. In this, and in the acquisition of car and clothes, "the practice of identity is the acquisition of otherness" (Friedman 1990, 324) but such "otherness" as is acquired results in no radical break with the past. Linguistic and philosophical identity, even of such long-established urban residents as the Toaripi (Ryan 1989), stories (Watson 1990), memories (Strathern 1992, 12) or land tenure, where land is owned by the ancestors and held in trust by the living for those yet unborn, are vastly more important than the recent trappings of modernity.

Consumption—and modern culture—are influenced, even engendered, by the establishment of a global economy. But the "strong globalizing influence arising from the emptying of social space and its filling-up by large bureaucratic organizations, based on systems of concentrated reflexive monitoring, the multinational corporations, state apparatus, financial systems and the like" is weak in Melanesia (Thrift 1993, 117). Such influences may dominate the lives of the urban elite; they are weakly transmitted to remote rural areas where materialism takes on different forms. Similarly although "a Congolese can identify everyone's social rank in a crowd by their outward appearance" (Friedman 1990, 315), this would be an impossible task in Melanesia, even though, there as elsewhere (Manning 1991), T-shirts provide subtle, but changing, markers of identity. Modernization and homogeneity have far from overwhelmed identity and difference.

Elite Melanesians, especially those who have married out of their *tokples* cultural group, have tended to form a more permanent urban population. This is particularly true of bureaucrats—with long employment tenure—who, if not already in capital cities, seek to migrate there (Allen 1983). Similarly, most university students seek to, and do, remain in the capital (Weinand and Ward 1979). Of the bureaucrats especially,

Their presence in urban areas not only deprives rural areas of what skills they possess, but ensures a continuing urban bias to the economy through their

greater purchasing power and their ability to influence decision-making. The children of urban-dwelling public servants are the first of a truly urban generation of Papua New Guineans. They cannot support themselves in a rural environment; they are committed to towns and may not carry the sympathies most adult Papua New Guineans now feel for village life. (Allen 1983, 228)

This separation may influence behavior. After barely half a century of any kind of "modern" government, and a decade after independence, "Chambri expected that those in government, including Chambri, would frequently fail to deliver on promises and would intercept government funds for personal use" (Gewertz and Errington 1991, 123). More generally, these are also the regional and national politicians who, "raised in urban settings and educated overseas proclaim the virtues of a *kastom* they have never known" (Keesing 1982b, 299). For some, urban life holds distinct attractions, which, though providing personal gains, do not challenge the ideological construction of ethnic identity. Urban migrants do not see their ethnic identity as diminished by development, education, or monetary success; rather they incorporate these elements into their ritual and political life. They remain in opposition to other ethnic groups, as historical fact and in contemporary terms, through competition for land, political influence, and economic progress (Graburn 1993, 103). Different lifestyles and opportunities have been welded together as "distinctive identities are created from turbulence, fragments, intercultural reference, and the localised intensification of global possibilities and associations" (Marcus 1992, 315). Many migrants, despite lengthy urban residence, express their disdain for various facets of urban life, though they would be no more content at home.

To retain urban privileges, urban resources must be diverted from the poor, so policies that favor equity in service distribution have faded from view (or are merely not implemented), while strong opposition is expressed to the growth of poor, migrant, urban populations. Typical of recent attempts to remove squatters from Papua New Guinea towns are those of mid-1991 in Lae and Rabaul. In Lae the provincial premier stated, "My plan to eject settlers is a genuine one for the sake of my people who want a trouble-free environment for their children. . . . As for Papua New Guinea which has a large area of land, I do not see why people should move from province to province. I am sure there are better things to do in their own villages or towns" (TPNG, 6 June 1991). The settlers did not share his perception. In Rabaul the provincial premier stressed, "We

want to help the settlers so they can have dignity and that they can grow their own cash crops in their respective villages. Villages are still the best and least expensive places to live in. Furthermore we want settlers to understand that they were not born to be slaves in towns. However they are making themselves slaves" (TPNG, 29 Aug 1991). The rural ideology has held very firm in the minds of long-established urban residents, especially where their urban privileges have been at stake. Urbanization has contributed to the undermining of authority, hierarchy, and dignity; distinctions of rank have been challenged, and patriarchal authority undermined (Wilson 1992, 91), only to be re-created in other forms. Women, especially unskilled and unmarried women, have invariably been discouraged from, and disadvantaged in, Melanesian city life.

Most apparent in the opposition to urban squatter settlements is the manner in which historic European colonial perceptions have been replicated in contemporary Melanesian perceptions. In a sense, the colonial order had penetrated and colonized local discourse (see T. Mitchell 1988).² This colonizing process has never fully succeeded; regions of resistance remain, such as the mountain Kwaio of Malaita, seemingly engaged in a long struggle for cultural autonomy (Keesing 1992) as do voices of rejection, including those who do not reject the "otherness" of squatter settlers. They are few. As Denoon has observed, "The attraction of closed towns is very obvious. . . . With one bound we rid ourselves of poverty, ignorance and disease; modern towns shed their nasty reminders of underdevelopment. . . . Closed towns are the millennial dream of the property-owning, rate-paying middle class" (1980, 283). The elite of the postcolonial era have adopted some of the mores of the colonialists, so reinforcing old divisions within the cities.

Melanesian urbanism emphasizes the role of historical specificity, plurality, and difference; there are few universals in a region where culture (and emotion and desire) are of pervasive importance. Local Melanesian languages, and the (usually geographically limited) circuits of communication in which they are spoken, are resources as well as limits, acting partly as shields against "global" influences (M. P. Smith 1992, 496–497; Seers 1983, 69–76), however these may be defined in a world where *local* and *global* are imprecise terms. Because Melanesia—since long before colonialism—has contained an astonishing variety of languages, cultures, and ecologies, identities (necessary fictions, in which rhetoric and invention are integral elements) are always in the process of becoming, formed and

reformed, devalued and revalued, invented and discarded. Context and conflict have produced complex cities and nations; in Albert Maori Kiki's world, contexts are fluid (eg, gold bonanzas at Mount Kare, secessionist struggles in Bougainville). Political practices constantly challenge identities. Contemporary urban politicians and gang leaders have adapted rural leadership skills in urban contexts, resulting in the efflorescence of the gift economy and involving social relations typical of "pre-capitalist" Melanesian societies (eg, Goddard 1992; Warry 1987). Notions of ethics, rationality, and justice are diverse. Political and bureaucratic practice hardly puts identities at risk, hence the tasks of urban planning and management have proved unusually difficult, and scarcely take account of or provide a voice for the different groups that live in the cities without forming wider communities. Because notions of ethnicity and identity are crucial to power relations, barely formed political practice—the art of the possible—is vital to the future of Melanesian cities and societies. Yet the set of notions posited by Harvey (1992) as central to the struggle to create livable cities and workable environments, is light years away from Melanesian reality, in any sense. Where land retains its crucial role, and as Melanesian cities move toward a new millennium, urban life will continue to display extraordinary diversity and incoherence.

* * *

A MUCH SHORTER version of this paper, "Distant Places, Other Cities? Urban Life in Contemporary Papua New Guinea," has been published in *Postmodern Cities, Spaces, Politics*, edited by S. Watson and K. Gibson (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994).

Notes

The poem "Tell Me," by John Laan was first published in *Pacific Islands Monthly*, July 1975, 49, and is reprinted here with permission.

1 Because the secondary literature focuses on Papua New Guinea and Port Moresby, this paper follows suit, thereby doing a disservice to the variations between places, none of which are inert, and all of which "are politicized, culturally relative, historically specific, local and multiple constructions" (Rodman 1992, 641). Essentialism inevitably (and unfortunately) follows.

2 There has also been powerful Melanesian opposition to movements of other Melanesians within rural areas, typified by opposition to Malaitans migrating to

the Guadalcanal plain in Solomon Islands (Chapman 1992, 94) or challenges to resettlement schemes in Papua New Guinea.

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Abstract

Melanesian urbanization is primarily postcolonial, occurring after colonial restrictions on migration and city growth. Recency, impermanence, discontinuity, and differences between places and cultures characterize city life. Culture influences socioeconomic organization; gangs rather than unions cut across social ties, insecurity strengthens identity, and the growing squatter settlements refine and define ethnic distinctiveness. Ideology reinforces rural ties. Security concerns have introduced new divisions. Modern dress, lifestyles, and language have shaped new identities, yet tribal and regional affiliations are more important than national identity. Melanesian cities are intricately subdivided places where ethnicity and cultural identity triumph over class. They are a peripheral part of the world capitalist economy where modernity challenges tradition and local resistance. Fragmented planning systems, weak or missing municipal governments, and inadequate finance have led to breakdowns in urban service delivery, mismanagement, diversity, and spontaneity. Melanesian urbanism emphasizes historical specificity, plurality, difference, and incoherence.